NORTH Bi NORTHWEST

Newsletter of the Seattle Bisexual Women's Network, a member project of Gay community Social Services

November, December, January 2003-04 **$3.00** *Volume 16 Issue 4*

Mama's Religion

by Carole E. Trainor

It never occurred to me that by lying down with a *straight as a poker* man I'd give birth to babies who were *straight as little pokers* and who, now that they're almost grown, dare not breathe when I attempt to imply that I'm not the heterosexual kind. I have never come right out and said " ...by the way, children, I'm not the heterosexual kind," but they know something's askew.

We live in a city where the right to things like alternative sexualities and/or sexual preferences are supposed to exist in abundance. You can imagine, then, how inane those still blabbering about freedoms might appear to the rest of our educated, politically correct thinking cosmopolitan.

One of the finest pieces of scholarship to come out of our country in the past few years has been produced by a woman who, like me, was raised in "welfare" poverty. Her name is Roxanne Rimstead. Her research focus is "the poor." She refers to our nations poor as our country's "remnants." I absolutely love the metaphor. My mother was a sewer, so the very idea that people could be considered as unnecessary to the fabric of society as "remnants" are to a piece of finished work, fit beautifully for me. My guess is that Rimstead's work will enjoy an ample amount of space in the bibliography sections of many an academic thesis. And it won't be for a lack of caring or sympathetic sentiment that the focus on the poor will fade as quickly as it was brought to the academic consciousness. Not necessarily. Many people who know nothing about the poor will attempt, in the only way they know, to speak the poor into their existence. (If it's all you know how to do, what else can do you?) It's that *straight as a poker* logic that convinces some of us that we can make a new, more humane kind of world by employing exactly the same means we used to make this world. It's illogical of course, but what can you do when there's no other sense to make?

We're heady here. We have quite a few universities packed into our small city for the size of us. Because of this, we've been dubbed Canada's "smart province," - which, like all illogical assumptions made about the connection between the business of education and human intelligence, is an inanely broad brush stroke of political whitewash. The most intelligent people in our country are not (necessarily) sitting in the classrooms or in the offices of our institutions of higher learning. It's more than likely they are kept busy enough just trying to defend their psychologies from the huge bulk of insanity and junk mail being hurled at them, day in and day out. Here, as elsewhere in our western world, the "thinker" is a usual, rather eccentric, misunderstood character. And much like the bisexual, s/he continues to be a piece that doesn't quite fit....

I left the *straight as a poker* man I'd married after seven long years of insisting on my right to not take up his/my designation as "wife." I try to explain to my children who are now older, and busy enough enjoying the material acquisitions their father gathered while I raised them in poverty, "I am not *that."* Like any loving parent, I try to guide and enlighten their psychologies as gently and as honestly as I can, while they, like many other children, view their fathers ability to gather and purchase things as a sure sign of his success and sanity. Because of that, they have nowhere to put the reality of me right now. They don't quite know how to think about, or name the emptiness they experience when in their fathers presence, or the joy they feel in mine. They do what they can to make the pieces that don't quite fit, fit.

Since they've never really asked, I feel I have to tell them: "Yes, my darling *straight as a poker* babies, your mother is a queer. She loves men's cocks and she loves the female cunt. She loves animals and flowers and the sight of a woman's breasts when the nipples are hard and erect. She loves the ocean and the taste of a good man's sperm. She loves dandelions and pumpkin soup and cauliflower with cheese. She loves black licorice cigars and cinnamon rolls. She loves wax lips and chocolate toffee and men whose voices are soft like a woman's. She loves zebras, monkeys, giraffes, unicorns, blue chips and gum that tastes like cherries. She loves to masturbate to bisexual erotica and fall asleep in her own arms. Her favorite kind of coloured grass is yellow, and her favourite kind of flower is the dandelion (the kind you gave her) She loves the sight of two women intimate in their physical love. (especially the thrill of a woman opening the labia of another) She loves the sight of men hungry to touch

... Continued on page 4

Join! $20-50 per year, sliding scale. Membership includes a one-year subscription to the newsletter.
Make me a card-carrying bisexual.
Enclosed is $_____.

Subscribe! $12 per year, flexible. I want to receive the latest bi news, opinions, writing, and art four times each year. Enclosed is $_____ for a one year subscription.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip Code: _____

Phone (*optional*): _____

How did you hear about us? _____

All contributions are tax-deductible. Please make checks payable to SBWN.

Send to: **SBWN, PO Box 30645, Greenwood Station, Seattle, Washington 98103-0645**

North Bi Northwest is the quarterly newsletter of the Seattle Bisexual Women's Network. It is produced by women and is feminist in content. We feature news and events pertinent to the bisexual community, as well as creative writing and artwork.

Copyright 1999 by North Bi Northwest (ISSN 1050-4680). ***Please let us know before reprinting anything from this publication (see address above), and always credit us with our name and address.***

We welcome submissions from women and men that concern feminism, politics, sexuality, or anything of interest to bisexual women. Help define our culture! Share your histories, anger, pleasure, energy. Send us your essays, poetry, photographs, drawings, book reviews, short stories, interviews, media reports, rants, cartoons, erotica, journals, theory, conversations and letters. You're important to us and what you have to say is important to everyone.

We accept submissions on disk with hard copy (PC), typed, legibly handwritten copy or e-mail (sbwn@hotmail.com). If you send us something and we publish it, you get a free issue. Let us know what pseudonym you use, if you do not want to publish under your everyday name.

Views expressed in *North Bi Northwest* are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily represent the views of SBWN. Inclusion in this publication does not indicate the author's sexual orientation.

Deadline for submissions to the new issue: January 19th 2004.

SBWN Statement of Purpose

We are a group of self-identified women from diverse backgrounds working to create a feminist bisexual support network. We promote, in both the heterosexual world, and in the lesbian/gay community, the understanding and acceptance of bisexuality as one of many valid sexual identities.

We regard ourselves as part of the community united against heterosexism and homophobia. We are dedicated to the right of all people to define their own sexuality, free from any social, political, or economic coercion. The discriminations we face based on our gender and our sexuality are not the only forms of oppression. We recognize that oppression is non-hierarchical and that none of us is free until all of us are free. We have invested ourselves in the feminist struggle to transform our culture into one free of all forms of bigotry, hatred, and exploitation.

We seek to provide a safe place for women to explore all aspects of their sexual orientation and identity. All women are welcome to attend SBWN activities. We are exclusively a women's group in order to create a safe space for women's expression and leadership. We come together to affirm ourselves and our choices.

North Bi Northwest

Editor:
Cyprienne Schroeppel

Technical Editor:
Jan Burke

Staff:
Dedicated Volunteers

SBWN PO Box 20645, Seattle, WA 98113-0645

SBWN can always use volunteers to help with a variety of tasks. Give us a call or talk to a facilitator at a meeting.

North Bi Northwest is available by subscription as noted above.

North Bi Northwest is a publication of the Seattle Bisexual Women's Network, a member project of:

Gay Community Social Services
P O Box 2228
Seattle WA 98122-0228

From the Editor...

Hello everyone. SBWN is getting settled in at our new location the LGBT Center. We had a well-attended business meeting where we discussed the future of the group and how we want it to continue. We are staying with two meetings a month on the first and third Sunday and keeping the poly meeting earlier in the day on the first Sunday. If attendance at the poly meeting continues to be low we will stop having that meeting after the first of the year. We have some new volunteers that came out of the business meeting. One woman to do the mail pick up from our P. O. Box and another to take over production of the newsletter from Jan.

We also had a great Safer Sex meeting with Sheri as guest speaker and enough women that we took over the larger room downstairs. Everyone went home with lots of free samples of condoms, lube and breast exam cards.

Jan, our current production goddess, came to visit from New York state and attended the business meeting. Diana and Dorothy held a party in Jan's honor that drew a large crowd and was much fun. There is an account of the party and pictures in this issue.

Also in this issue, we have a new author writing about her experience of being bisexual and a mother. We have poetry from another author new to this publication. We also have a very thoughtful review of a book written by Leilani about butch femme life.

Several SBWN members met up at Girl-For-Girl for a social outing and danced the night away. This is the second time that event has drawn a group from SBWN in the last two months.
On the national front, the Massachusetts supreme court sent out a ruling that could legalize gay marriage in that state. Don't go rushing to move there though as the legislature still has to respond to the ruling.

The Bush administration and the Republican controlled congress has approved a Medicare drug benefit but there are serious problems with the legislation. Some say that it rewards the pharmaceutical companies and the HMO's and will end up destroying Medicare in the long run. Another big win for the wealthy and the corporations.

A few weeks ago I had to clear a couple of inches of snow off my car and it's been incredibly cold here. Part of the reason I left the East Coast was to get away from snow, ice and cold and now I have to deal with it again.

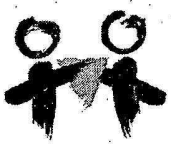
I have been having some family problems and this editorial has taken me a long time to write. Jan has been holding up the newsletter for me and I want to apologize for the lateness of this issue.

Cyprienne

Lesbian Resource Center

Where women meet, help, entertain, educate and challenge one another

- Drop-in, resources & referral, library
- Social & support groups, game nights, trips
- Cabarets, 1st Sunday Brunch, readings
- Advocacy, forums & education
- Tech lab, workshops, monthly paper



For More Information Please Contact LRC at
206-322-3953 Lrc@lrc.net

www.leilanimassage.com

▶Swedish & Hawaiian ▶Injury Treatment
▶Most Insurance Plans ▶medical Provider
▶Steam & Aromatherapy ▶Gift Certificates

P. Leilani Berry, LMP #MA7027
SeaTac/Tukwila (206) 248-2001

truth of their own carnal, needy existences by fucking hard and fast. This is her religion."

I saw two men fuck on film once. They sat upright like Buddha. They fucked while staring into the eyes of each other. They were hungry and honest in their need for each other. There was not an insincere moment to the whole sordid affair. (ironically enough, there was not a moment one felt pornographic looking on, either) It was raw and sweet and full of force and energy and surrender. When each came to orgasm, one leaned back to take a deep breath into his lungs. The other leaned forward to kiss him on the forehead. While the one leaning back closed his eyes in relief and satisfaction, the other said, (ingenuous as a spent child) "thank you." The breath was knocked out of me with the power and the beauty of that moment.

That's when I got religion. In the queerest of moments, I found god and got my religion at the same time. At the very least, I understood that the me of me simply cannot be contained or defined or "patented" as others would have hoped I could be. I learned that it really doesn't matter how many times I go to church on Sunday or how many churches I attend in my lifetime or what denomination I ultimately become. It doesn't matter. Our beings are not one dimensional ideas or constructions we can put together like a prebuilt kitchen shelf. They just aren't. My humanness and/or my bisexuality simply cannot be held or contained inside closed systems of thought anymore than I can be contained inside plaster walls Being the queer I am, I could only have learned this through watching and experiencing two queers fuck. (What straight person is gonna tell you this straight out?)

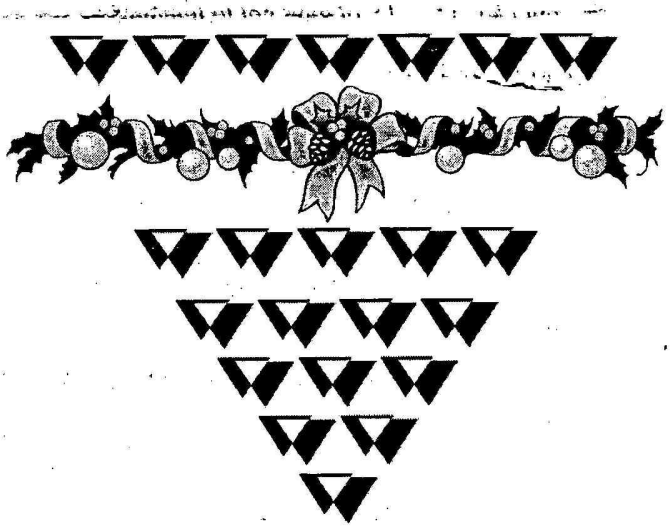
The wild splash of new breath born in me as a result of witnessing two men fuck had me realize that fucking probably holds the greatest potential for our creating the boldest, most brazen, most life affirming of Human Art and Thought imaginable. Fuck the scientific methodologies that attempt to pin life down. Fuck the scientific methodologies that play life backwards in attempt to give us a slow replay. I refuse to leave my children a legacy of recycled thought that keeps getting moved around like raggy old bras and underwear that don't fit anymore but that still take up room in our top dresser drawers because we don't know what else to do with them. My children deserve better than this. My children deserve to know that we don't have to hold onto old thoughts or old paradigms or old anaysis that don't fit the new life that is being born simply because we don't know what else to do with the old stuff when it's easy enough (long as you're not one of the poor) to buy a shredder. (The old aprons in the cardboard [second one from the bottom] are permanently stained with tomato paste, mother. It's time to let go.)

Look Dick! See Jane Go! (does it really matter which orifice she chooses to stick her finger in 'til she comes, or goes?) Soon enough, I'm afraid, more of us will have to be straight and tell our children: "My sweet, *straight as a poker* children, your mother is a bisexual queer person whose masculine aspect loves to fuck beautiful gay or bisexual (never straight) men hard and fast, (I am sorry to have to tell you) and the feminine aspect of her loves to bask in sensuality with a naked Lesbian or bisexual woman, (never straight, I am sorry to have to tell you) but the straight woman in her just wants to be good friends with the straight man in her (I'm sorry to have to tell you) because each finds no sexual pleasure, or can create new thoughts in, or through, each others gender which is not on par with the gender of the other so therefore there can be no equality or justice or beauty or energy or art born of that which isn't equal, but (like mummy and daddy) we're going to be really good friends for your sake. (so no worries)

In other words, (or to make a long story short) my sweet, *straight as a poker* children, your mother sees god's face in the face of the person she's fucking at the time she's fucking 'cause that's the only way she knows how to get herself lifted up to into the backdoor of heaven and give witness to the glory of god. - And don't believe for a second, my beautiful children, what those awful gays and straights tell you about us: Bisexuals are here! We're here and we're queer - and like the bumble bees who, in ear shot of the inane physicist who swears they're heavier than air, we just keep the buzz alive: 'Get used to it Einstein!'

It's pronounced, 'Bisexuality,' and you might find a little paragraph written up on it in a few texts or journals in a few libraries somewhere in the country.. It's considered, 'an orientation' of sorts. And that's how you'll understand it's really something else, because that's who your mother is, my babies. That's your mama's religion."

Carole E. Trainor is the editor of the Canadian Feminist compilation, "And I Will Paint the Sky." Her works have been featured in various newspapers, magazines and journals throughout Canada. She is a Feminist Poet whose works continue to enjoy National publication. She lives in Nova Scotia,Canada.



"Fads"

By Pete Chvnay

Why is it that when people want to claim that bisexuality is just a fad, it's usually David Bowie, Elton John, and the "bisexual chic" of the early 70's they point to? Come on. Those guys are so twenty-five years ago!

Some people will stop at nothing to paint bisexuality safely fake. When recently was it chic to be bi? What do these people think bisexuals do with their supposedly faddish lives?

"Hi Mom. Listen, are you sitting down? I've got something to tell you. Ready? Okay. I'm bisexual."

"Aw, Mom, don't be like that. It's okay. Really."

"Yes, Mom, it's popular to be bisexual right now."

"Yeah, Ma, lots of people are into it. Remember that guy who delivers the heating oil? Remember my sixth-grade math teacher? They're bi. Oh, and your friends from the bridge club? Guess what? Yup. Bi too."

"I know it's not exactly what you expected, but that's how things are these days."

"No, really, you see it everywhere. A lot of guys in the dorm have been talking about coming out of the closet lately. They want to have someone to hang out with when their girlfriends are doing homework or watching the soaps, or studying for exams. If they were straight they'd have to watch out how much time they spent together, or people might think stuff. But if they're bi, it's okay."

"All the guys on the football team are dating each other now. It makes road trips a lot more fun if you can sleep with your roommate. I hear it's spreading through all the frats, too, but those guys you don't take so seriously, it could just be some prank. The football team, though, when they came out like that, a lot of guys got to thinking."

"Oh, yeah, Ma, the girls, too. I hear it was a big thing on the women's softball team last spring. Maybe that's how it got started. You know how college life goes."

"Am I seeing any nice girls? Wow, you bet! Since I came out bi, I get a lot of dates. Chicks dig it. Plus, I have twice as many people to pick from no matter what. That's a joke, Ma. Some old-time comedian used to say that. George Burns, maybe."

"No, Ma, if my friends jumped off a cliff I wouldn't jump too."

"Really, it's pretty cool being bi. It's kind of like being gay except more confusing. Bambi Taylor and I were out on a date last weekend at a gay bar. We had the best time. I almost picked this guy up. He was kind of cute, for a gay guy. I think he dug me. We were dancing and I asked him to come home with me, and he said yes. It was cool. But then I introduced him to Bambi, and when I asked was it okay if she came with us and watched, he got cold feet. No, I dunno why, Ma. I know, I figured bi, gay, what's the difference, they wouldn't care, but I guess they do."

"The best part was later, though. Bambi and I came out of the bar, and some skinheads saw us. Yeah, real scary types. They decided I must be gay, `cause you know, gay bar. Me and Bambi were holding hands, but I guess they didn't notice that. So they called me a faggot and stuff, and we kept on walking, but they followed us for a couple of blocks. We were starting to get worried, and finally one of them threw a rock at us. No, don't worry, Ma, the stitches are totally excellent, I won't even have a scar. It was cool. I never got gay-bashed before, and it was a real turn on. Afterward Bambi and I ... okay, sorry Ma, I won't tell you too many details."

"So being bi is pretty much everywhere now. This one lesbian in my psych class? She came out bi right in the middle of a lecture. Just stood up and announced it. I guess she was tired of being uncool. So anyway, all her old lesbian friends totally dropped her after that. Yeah, everybody she'd relied on since she came out lesbian a couple of years ago, when it wasn't cool to be queer at all. Everyone she knew who was really supportive before, all her closest friends, they just didn't get this whole bi thing. She was gonna kill herself over it for a while. Yeah, pretty intense. But all us other bisexuals got together and said, who needs friends when you can be cool? And besides, Elton John was bi for a few years, and look how many little kids know all the words to `Circle of Life' by heart."

"So tomorrow all the bi kids are going to pile into a phone booth, and then some of the guys are going to have a goldfish-swallowing contest. After that I think we're supposed to drop acid, and then protest the Vietnam War or the whales, or something. I don't really know the details, but as long as it's what the in crowd is doing, you know, gotta go with the flow."

"Yeah, I'm studying, too, Mom."

"Yeah, Mom, I use condoms, mostly, unless I forget. I'm promiscuous and confused, not stupid."

"Yeah, I love you too, Ma. Bye."

Yes. That's exactly how it is.

Not! :)

Originally published in The Slant as "Fads", June 1999, p. 19.
Copyright 1999 Peter A. Chvany.

Advertise with us!

Bi Women Buy Things!

Reasonable Prices Too. . .

Business Card	$10 per issue / $30 per year
One-quarter Page	$15 per issue / $45 per year
Three-quarter Page	$20 per issue / $60 per year
Full Page	$25 per issue / $75 per year

Pay for 3, get the 4th for free

For more information

Contact North Bi Northwest

through SBWN at

SBWN, PO Box 30645, Greenwood Station
Seattle, Washington 98103-0645
Or leave a message at: (206) 517-7767

WWC

The Women's Welcoming Committee

A safe place for women to learn about BDSM

The WWC meets on the first Tuesday of every month from 7–9 p.m. at the Sex Positive Community Center, 1630 15th Ave West, near the Magnolia Bridge in Seattle.

Meetings are:

- A chance to ask questions
- A place to learn about events
- Open to all women
- Casual
- Free

For more information, including some links to useful resources and instructions for subscribing to the WWC mailing list, vist our web page: www.bent.org/wwc

The English Inn
Bed & Breakfast

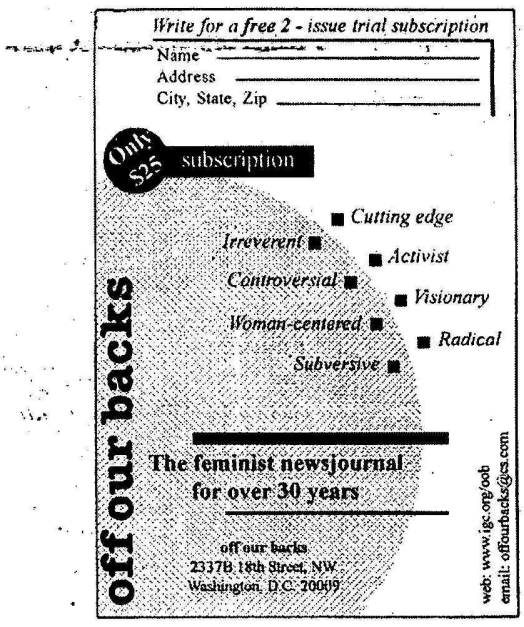
Martin & Jennifer MacGillonie
718 F Street
Port Townsend,
WA 98368

(360) 385-5302
(800) 254-5302
www.english-inn.com

A $10 donation will be given to SBWN every time a member stays at the English Inn.

Neptune
Studios and Gallery

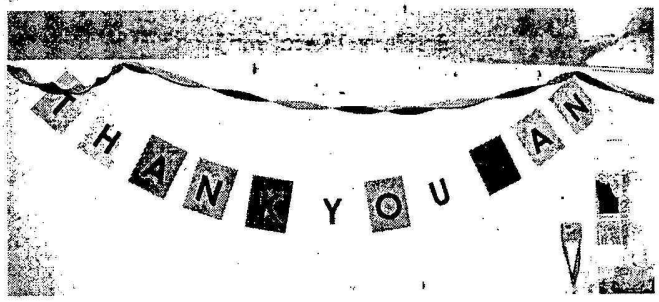
Visit the Gallery Site:
www.neptunestudiosandgallery.com
We are currently seeking artists to show their work on our web-site
Professional FINE ART artists are welcome to submit their work for review.
For details contact Jan at cowbone@earthlink.net



The Party Report - *Word on the Street*

by Sheri

Once again Diana and Dorothy hosted a party that was a rollicking good time. Many thanks to our lovely hosts!!! Jan was in town for a visit and her passing of the newsletter torch seemed to be an excellent reason for a party. It was a good excuse to try and show her a tiny bit of our deep appreciation for all the hard work she has done for the newsletter (despite moving back to upstate New York while still production goddess).



The party had every ingredient for a great time. There was more yummy food (from vegan cookies to cheesecake) than we could possibly ever eat. The music was diverse and quite danceable. Danceable enough that there were still people dirty dancing past time for the bars to close! And once again the SBWN canopy came to the rescue sheltering the rebel smokers when the skies opened up and it started pouring.

Most importantly, we were awash in beautiful bi babes!!! Everyone had decked out in their party best and looked quite stunning. Luckily for all of us, a few people stopped by on their way to Halloween parties with their costumes adding a bit of spice to the evening. We have included pictures in this issue of a few members in the crowd - Hope all of you who missed this one can join us for the next one!

Thank You

Diana and Dorothy
and SBWN

It was a fabulous party!
I was buzzed it's true
(But I remember everything)

It was so good to see you all.

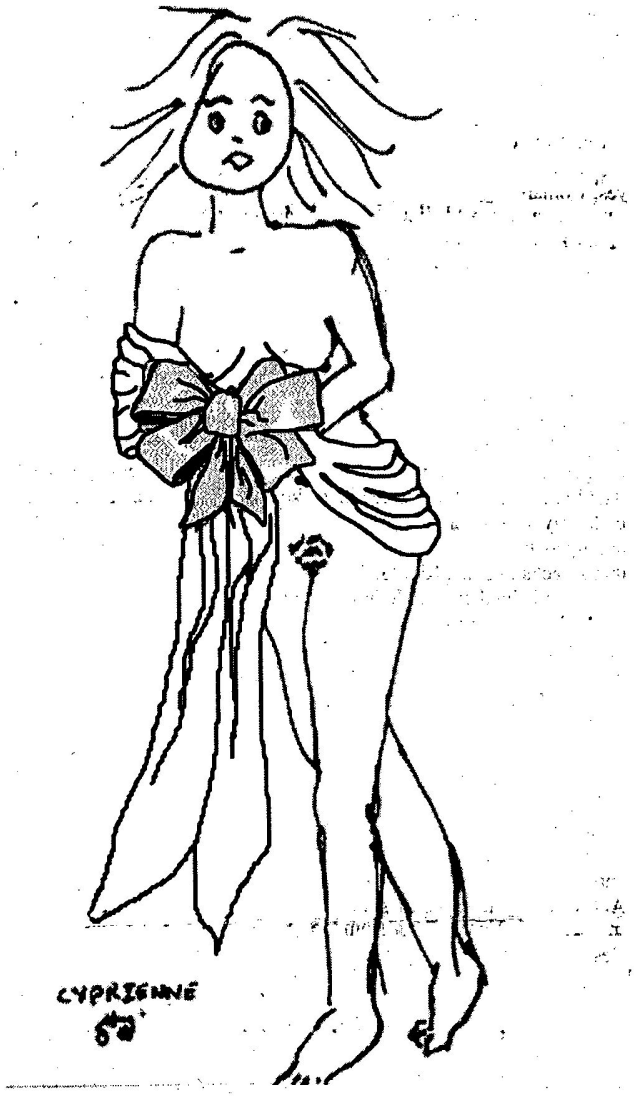
-Jan

Poetry & Pros

Suckle the Dew

Anonymous

I suckled the love from her lips when we kissed goodnight. The day flashed across my face as I recalled preparations for the evening once reserved for me and discovered at the right moments. Cleaning the house and picking pretty



underclothing. I obliged without request by cleaning my side of the bedroom. I put away private things knowing her date might peruse them while she waited in the bed for her lover's return. It is such an odd sharing between two people in the same space at different times. Will I notice her scent on the sheets when I return home? I declared all of my space public for the evening and wished her a good time. Should I have reserved something or somewhere special just for us? I discard the notion as artificial. No one thing or place makes me feel special when she's absent.

The dew upon my lips has dried but my excitement grows. I will reclaim her when I return to our home and I will press myself against her tired body. I'll seek imperfect proof of the evening by feeling her familiar curves and note any markings not of my making. I'll cover them with healing kisses.

I'll know our love was unharmed in the freedom and has expanded in my absence. There will be more to talk about, more to feel, more of her to share. Her excitement will glow and reassure me that our life is safe and more intimate than before.

I delayed my arrival long enough to give them privacy. I'm greeted with a rush of emotions seeing an unfamiliar car. I was early and unexpected when I opened the door. Her lover was startled by my appearance but my love had a calm smile happy to see me.

I wondered if her beautiful hair showed signs of being recently brushed as I got comfortable on the couch. We chatted lightly to dispel any discomfort then I suggested they relocate to another room so I could turn in for the night. I looked for dishevelment in the bedroom scraping together possible scenarios of the evening. I pulled back the covers to see mistaken evidence. I looked up to the streetlight that made me squint only to unexpectedly see them leaning on the car. They are inches apart in unfinished goodbyes. I look away not wanting to intrude and climb into bed but I was kept awake by the need to know what happened. My wife returned to my side to chat about the evening. I want all and none of the details. Yes or no was all I needed but neither evenings nor people are that simple. Sleep made my eyes heavy and I couldn't see if she needed reassurance our love was safe.

I cleaned up the wine glasses in the morning and saw incomplete shadows on the floor. I kissed my lover goodbye again and communicated understood promises. I remembered the familiar dew on her lips the night before and I lick at her love through my mind.

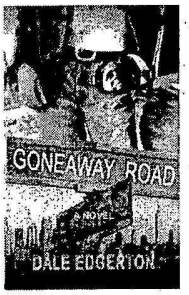
Pacifist Loses Her Patience
by Sequoia Megary Sigler

I am a size 18 woman,
I am a size eighteen.
I am not your slick, sharp, smack,
violently cool,
masochistic,
skinny straight girl on a stick
waiting for you to consume me,
waiting to make you full.
My ancient station wagon's
wide old ass
is plastered with bumper stickers,
a little light reading for the Republican
stopped behing me
and I call my car Gertrude Stein.
And we go as slow as we please.
I am not a woman to be rushed.
I am a womon of love.
I am a woman of love.
And when I hold her in my arms
I am holding on,
humbled by her beauty,
humbled by the beauty of her presence
in this world.
Wide-hipped
in boys' shorts
I strut
and hold her hand
gently
gently
like I am cradling revolution
in infant form
If you cannot recognize this as love
then you are losing sight of yourself.
Every time you see
the enemy in me
the enemy in us
because we do not love
look
live
like you,
because we are darker,
or slower,
or queerer,
you lose a scrap of you
until you are not quite human
until you are not
quite
alive.
I do not fit in,
I do not fit into your boxes,
your bags,
your closets of meekness and shadow,
Nothing about me is skinny or small.
Nothing about me
can be packaged or sold.
I have brought my insecurity home for supper,
made it welcome at my table.
It can't hurt me.
If you look outside your window
you may see me pass
you
by.
I'll be singing
with triumph
and rage
alive, blood and bone,
breathing it all deep
radiant
in my size eighteen spirit,
bigger
than anything
you know.

Dangerously Good
by Sequoia Megary Sigler

If all you gave me were boxes,
a set of two,
his and hers,
I'd check "woman."
And you would be satisfied,
clean and crisp my check mark,
small and square your box,
all ninety-degree angles
While I am nothing but curves.
But if you gave me
a few lines,
a few minutes
more,
I would write
Woman,
yes, woman.
But gender slips and slides and no I will never say
I am anything other than woman
but woman is a wide open word.
In my black blazer and men's jeans
knees spread, hair gelled,
head
cocky,
know-it-all suave,
my gender is Bogart,
my gender is long legs that stride,
my gender is broad, muscular shoulders and a swashbuckling pride.
And I am wearing thick-soled black boots and a black silk bra
under my blazer
and lipstick
that smacks of some Riot Grrl rebellion,
my voice is loud and crude in it's revolt,
my body is unshaved
and unbeaten
and my gender is do not fuck with me because
I know how strong a woman can be.
And I will cradle your baby safe in my arms
and sing lullabies low
and keep innocence sacred
and my gender is soft, powerful mother, parent,
protector,
big-bodies mind and womb that longs to give birth
and swap stories with someone half my height.
And when my lover cradles me
my gender is Venus rising from the sea,
flesh and beauty and the smell of salt water,
as petals drape the sweet curves of me,
graceful as a pony,
soft as a peach.
My gender is gentleman,
Robin Hood, big-boned glamor queen,
Greta Garbo, Ani Difranco,
Errol Flynn.
Who decided that these precious parts of me,
my body and my sexuality,
the way I feel when I walk
and whether my clothes hold me tight
or let me loose,
get only one part to play?
Only one role on your skin and bones stage?
My femaleness entails
a whole lot more
than what you say it should.
I will take all the roles
and make them dangerously good.

Book Reviews



Goneaway Road

By Dale Edgerton
Genre: Queer Male Fiction
Review by Sheri

Goneaway Road is a moving novel. It opens in a mid-size town in North Carolina in the mid 1970's, and traces the lives of four friends over the next 20 years.

I enjoyed Edgerton's choice to switch voices from chapter to chapter. He manages to write each chapter switching between the lead characters perspectives without losing the thread of the story. This technique provides the reader with a rich panorama as the friends' lives unfold. As he uses both straight and queer characters as well as male and female, the views presented form a vibrant tapestry.

The friends experiment through the sexually charged 70's and struggle with the new "gay cancer" in the 80's. All of the friends are connected with theatre and so simultaneously struggle with their attempts to gain theatrical success both in North Carolina and in New York City. The queer male sex scenes are raw and compelling – a mix of emotionality and lust. The male-female sex scenes are less graphic but still convey a great deal of eroticism. By writing in so many voices, Edgerton is able to expose his characters' inner struggles with self-understanding, substances, love and sex in short order – allowing for depth despite spanning two decades of dramatic changes.

As a person who came to the queer scene "post AIDS" this book provided me with a touching window in to what it must have been like to be living with queer family as AIDS emerged.

I would highly recommend this book. It made me laugh as well as cry.

Femme/Butch Considerations of the Way We Want to Go

Editors Michelle Gibson and Deborah T. Meem
Book Review by P Leilani Berry

This book offers a collection of essays, poetry, art, and photography by a variety of authors and artists. The topics covered range from glimpses at butch femme history and oppression, butch motherhood, heterogendered systems to a look toward the future. The new word for the day is heterogendered. Heterogendered desires are such that masculine desires feminine and feminine desires masculine.

The book includes a few very engaging discussions outside American culture. The look into the queer movement, both past and present, in Chinese cultures abroad was fascinating. We examined the desire and knowledge of the wives of passing women, female husbands, of eighteenth century Britain. We find that Post Communism Bulgaria lesbians use the terms masculine and feminine to describe active versus passive sexual behavior. I am fascinated by intentional gender, gender deviancy, and queer subcultures in other societies.

The rest of the book lacked any real discussion of race, class and social economic issues in America. The editors readily acknowledged this void; therefore, the remaining commentary about this compilation can be construed as about a rather homogenous mostly White middle class women's community. This was especially disappointing in the piece on non-lesbian masculine and feminine women. I think of all the women I know who work assembly lines and look remarkably masculine by some standards. Working class non-lesbian women express their femininity differently than upper middle class women through behavior, dress, and attitude.

The study of queer women found that women were aware of the gender before they were aware of their orientation. Even more noteworthy was that butches came to realize their orientation statistically much younger than femmes. Is this because society was already so focused on them and how they deviated from norms about gender, and therefore, sexuality? Is this because images of feminine women were accessible to butches providing them a catalyst? Whereas, for femmes, many do not see any butch identified women until they become a part of the women's community.

Butches and motherhood was not a new thought for me, after having attending more than a few events in Olympia, where dykes breed like it's nobody's business. I had not, however, contemplated how pregnant butches and butch mothers feel about the perceptions of other butches and society. Most people think of pregnancy and motherhood as a sort of ultimate feminine act. The personal accounts of how they take their experiences and see them as a part of their butch identity were quite moving to me. Butch mothers, potentially an unexpected pairing like femmes who are mechanics or butches

that sew, are the transgressions out of the box that open the really interesting discussions of gender identity.

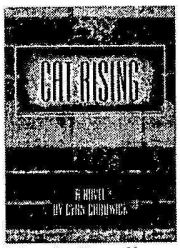
A number of the authors suggested that Daddy, Mommy, girl and boy roles are made out desires to recreate family and needs for those roles come from a child like need for a Daddy or Mommy. My attraction to these roles coupled with my family-of-origin issues left me somewhat disturbed, and yet I will certainly be pondering the theory and what truth I may find in its simplicity.

The essay about the similarities and differences of stone butches and transmen, should have been further qualified that orientation and sexual behavior included would only be that of heterogendered systems. A butch is acknowledged and potentially esteemed as a part of the women's community and yet, is considered gender deviant to society at large. Butch dykes and transmen are often mistaken as biological men. If their sexed body is discovered to be different, they are frontline targets of hatred and homophobia. The author assumes that a transman is recognized and seen as a man in society at large, and that he may not be perceived as queer or a threat to the binary gender system. The author uses the term audience as community recognition and social acceptance. She argues that butches are more concerned with constructing and presenting to the butch femme community, and transmen are more focused on passing as men in the heterosexual binary gender system. But she fails to mention the acceptance and influences of the trans and genderqueer community and the possible effects of being "outed" as a transman. She lumps the gender expression and orientation of transmen as the same as butches. Apparently, she does not know any butches who date transmen, trannyfags, bisexual butches or transmen, and transmen who make themselves visible as queers. Additionally, the issues of race and class are completely missed. What if the difference between some stone butches and some transmen is geographical access, economics, resources, and support to transition? What about transguys of color? Do their communities acknowledge them or reject them? How does their transitioning affect their power or voice in their communities? How does the mainstream culture then treat them as men?

I thoroughly enjoyed the piece on femmes and the subversiveness of claiming your gender. I appreciated the thought-provoking commentary about how femmes are often identified only as subversive because of their female partner rather than through themselves and their acts.

We, femmes, are visible as we speak out instead of being nice, as society would teach us. As we strap on, as we embrace our curves, and as we love our femme sisters of size, we are radical. We are subversive in our own rights as we construct and de-construct femininity, as we engage in performance femininity, and as we refuse to be and act straight.

I would recommend this book as long as you are not expecting the influences of race and class and the gender expressions of transfolk to be included. It can serve as a jump off point for further discussion and exploration of gender among sexual minority women and transfolk.



Cat Rising

by Cynn Chadwick
Genre: Lesbian Fiction
Review by Sheri.

Cat Rising is the story of a lesbian carpenter/writer ("Cat") in a small town in North Carolina. Her first book has finally been published and its success is pushing her to re-evaluate her life.

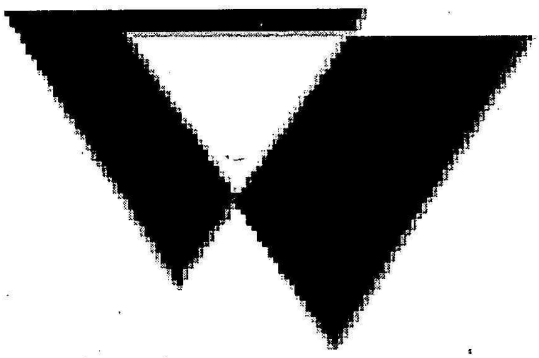
This book didn't bowl me over, but it was a nice novel to read on my end of summer vacation. It has all the elements you might want in a lesbian novel – a Harley, a mountain cabin, romance, artists, girls with hammers, and a dyke bar. All it is missing, somewhat refreshingly, is an actual feline or three.

Coming from the South myself, I was a bit surprised by the broad-based acceptance of homosexuality portrayed in this small mountain town. While there was some discussion of high school angst over orientation, all-in-all, the town seemed quite supportive. And it seemed awash in lesbians! The per capita lesbian count (at least given the hopping dyke bar and the long list of ex-lovers) astonished me. Maybe it has to do with the author being located in Asheville. By all reports, Asheville is a wonderful Southern haven for queer artist types (See North Bi Northwest's lead article in the issue of February, March, April 2002 Volume 15, Issue 1.) The small town in southern Virginia (Charlottesville), where I went to graduate school and first came out, was certainly not so lucky – despite the presence of a few well known lesbians like Rita Mae Brown.

Cynn does a nice job exploring what constitutes family and home and the role of family history in her protagonist's development of self. There are humorous side vignettes cleverly woven into the overall story in the form of flashbacks and entertaining carpentry jobs. These give the novel a richness that makes for an enjoyable read.

My only real complaint with the book was, per usual, the complete lack of recognition of bisexuality as a possibility. There are characters with sexual histories that could be bi – but most discussions tend to focus on if someone is a "lezzie" or not. Still, I didn't read it as bi-phobic in any way – more bi-lacking.

Overall, I would recommend this novel for vacation reading. Some substance – but not too heavy.



20th Party Notes

From Sheri

The party was very fun! It pulled together quite well - a big thanks to everyone. I would do individual thanks, but almost everyone there lent a hand at some point! I would do a specific thanks to Cyprienne, Sloan and Annette for all their hard work. We were excited to have Jet Tenley, the SBWN founder not only join us for the evening, but also serve as a tireless volunteer for almost the entire event. Here all the way from Walla-Walla and we put her to work :) And Jan and Cyprienne surprised us with a history of SBWN booklet that had the original ad that started SBWN on the cover. Be sure to pick one up next time you are at group.

We cleared (after paying for food and the musician) $280, of which $165 was from the raffle. Thanks to Leilani, Holly, Annette, Roberta and Cyprienne for the prizes. Combined with the $150 already donated specifically to cover the musician, this fundraiser netted us $430! We have almost $800 in the account now, the best situation our finances have been in for several years.

We had a last minute switch in performers. Holly Figueroa (our original performer) went into severe false labor Wed evening two months early. From her bed she found us a replacement performer by Friday morning. What dedication! Megan Peters, her replacement, was fantastic. She is a recent transplant from Utah, with a stunningly sexy vocal quality. And, she generously donated half of all her CD sales that evening to SBWN.

Attendance was somewhat lower than we had hoped -- in the mid to upper twenties over the course of the evening. The people who couldn't make it really missed a great party!

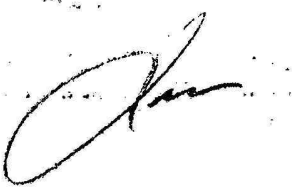
Jan's Note:

Hello everyone,
This will be the last newsletter I prepare as North-Bi-Northwest's technical editor. I have to say it has been a great pleasure serving such a wonderful group. While I will continue to contribute, I am stepping down from my position after this issue is published. I am thrilled that Christine has agreed to take on this volunteer job. It is very rewarding and I know she will be wonderful at it. I hope members and readers will continue to contribute and help Christine and Cyprienne make this a great publication.

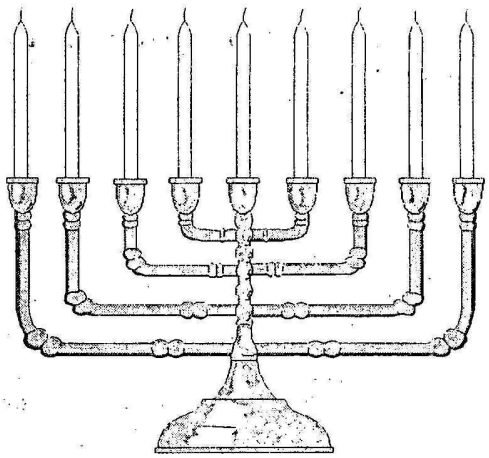
While I will still be sending in work for the newsletter, I have become very involved in a local group here in New York, called Mohawk Valley Pride Alliance. It is very likely that I will be writing for their soon to be established newsletter and possibly assisting in its production. I am very excited.

I want to thank you all for your support and submissions over the past few years. The newsletter could not have continued without it.

I'm looking forward to seeing all of the great newsletter work that Christine and Cyprienne will be doing as well as the submissions from our group...Of course, I will maintain my subscription. Take care all.



Hand Woven
Scarves – Shawls – Vests – Ponchos – Blankets
By Cyprienne
Visit Her Web-site @
www.loomwoven.com



The Best Sex

By Cyprienne

I was watching tv tonight when an ad for an upcoming show caught my interest. It was one of those reality-tell-all shows. A contestant was asked "What was the best sex you ever had?"

My first reaction as a feminist was how dare they try to get people to think of the sexual act in terms of a rating system. Good, better, best. In this ad both questioner and contestant were male which certainly affected my reaction. I thought how typical of men to rate different sexual encounters.
Then I found myself thinking, feminist values aside, how would I answer such a question? How do you chose a single sexual experience out of a lifetime's worth of encounters? And what about the fact that each partner offers a unique combination of experience and technique and anatomy? I would have to chose a variety of 'bests' to truly answer such a question.

The first candidate that sprung to mind was a night many years ago when I went to a party with a boyfriend, I will call him Jim but that was not his real name. At the party I wasn't expecting to meet many people that were known to me. I was delighted to find two friends of mine, a married couple were there. I spent a long time talking with Linda, also not her real name. Somehow the conversation turned to our sex lives and our partners and sexual exploration. I don't know who first mentioned it but we both expressed an interest in a sharing of ourselves and our partners in a group encounter. Sometime later in the evening we all ended up piling into Jim's car and heading over to Jim's and my apartment.

We invited Linda and Alex, not his real name, to continue the party at our place. After we arrived and were getting comfortable, Linda mentioned that she and Alex were interested in making the earlier conversation a reality right then and there. I had to take Jim aside to fill him in on the conversation and he somewhat reluctantly agreed. We must have talked about guidelines somewhere in there because I know we agreed that only the partners would have intercourse with their partners but anything else was allowed. Neither of the men involved were particularly inclined to same sex attractions but Linda and I were very much interested in playing with each other as well as with the men.

We punched up a bunch of songs on the jukebox, drank a little wine and smoked a little grass. We started to get very mellow and the clothes were shed. We were sitting on the carpet close together and slowly started touching. We formed this amorphous mass of anonymous hands and bodies. It was incredibly sensuous and exciting, not knowing who's hands were touching different body parts. There were kisses and caresses, wet fingers and tongues (this was before the spectre of AIDS), finger penetration, massage. Eventually we partnered off and fucked and then they got up, got dressed and went home. We talked about trying to repeat the experience but for various reasons that particular combination never happened again.

Was it the best sex I ever had? It was the best encounter of that particular kind.

Then there was the time when I was visiting one of my best friends from high school. I had moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts but I spent a few days back in Chicago. I was invited to spend an evening with J and her boyfriend K. The first part of the evening was not much fun as we met and hung out at the Scientology center where they were both taking classes and volunteering.

Later we went to their apartment. J started dancing sexually alone in the center of the room and flirted with both me and her boyfriend K. I got playful and K and I encouraged J to strip while she danced. When she was nearly naked, she came over and stood me up and started to remove my clothes. J and K got up and went together into the bedroom. After a short time, J came out and invited me to come into their bed and share K with her. I loved J and very much wanted to have sex with her.

K and I had just met that night so I was not sure I wanted to have sex with him but I was game if it got me into intimate contact with J. I followed J into the bedroom and climbed into bed with them and started tentatively touching J. First just pressing my body close to her and then actively running my hands over her body and kissing her. I touched her while K made love to her and she reached out to gather me into the experience. My body vibrated with desire and responded, like desert sand soaking up the rain. It was the first time I deliberately touched a woman with passion. We didn't penetrate each other though I did have intercourse with K while J held me and nestled close.

It was the best sex I had with a woman and, at the time, it was also the only sex I had ever had with a woman.
And there was a night when I was sixteen. I had moved out of my mother's apartment for the summer and into a small house my brother had rented for his first summer home from college. He would entertain his girlfriend on the studio couch in the living room of the house. My room was just off the living room and had only a curtain hanging in the open doorway to approximate privacy. I was trying to sleep and was being distracted by the sounds of lovemaking I couldn't help overhearing.

I opened my journal and started to write my frustration at the situation. While I wrote I could feel the wetness building between my legs. I turned over, my bed was a slim mattress on the floor, and continued to write with one hand while I ground my clitoris against a waded piece of cloth. I had several climaxes intensified by the continuing sounds of pleasure emanating from the other side of the curtain.

At the time and for many years, it was the best sex I ever had with myself.

The "Wu Wu" Page

...for entertainment only...

Horoscopes

♐ Sagittarius Nov 22 to Dec 21

Key word: Courage. Yes, courage was your key word last time also. You have taken that first step to freeing yourself of your fears. Keep going. You have more work to do. There will be a light at the end of the tunnel. It just ♐ Your current state of confusion is do to lack of perspective rather than circumstance. Take some time for yourself to establish your needs and expectations then follow through. Take care of yourself! This will help you get through the rough spots more quickly.

♑ Capricorn Dec 21-Jan 20

Key word: Creativity. You are by nature a creative person. Coming creative bursts will give you the meditative time you need to break through and discover new things about yourself and the world around you. ♑ You are finding ways to pad your holiday fund. If you keep at these skills past the New Year you will find that they are viable in providing a second source of income. Don't dismiss your new ideas because the holidays are over.

♒ Aquarius Jan 20 to Feb 18

Key word: Adventure. Seems your big changes have not entirely ceased. The New Year will bring many more. You just may wind up where you stared, but the journey will have brought with it valuable experience and understand of things before unconsidered. ♒ You have an awesome decision ahead of you. Step back and get the big picture. Seemingly insignificant choices have far reaching effects. Take all of the available options in and carefully weigh each one before settling on anything.

♓ Pisces Feb 18 to Mar 20

Key word: Patience. Sorry Pisces. We know you have been waiting and waiting. Just a tiny bit more. The New Year is just around the corner and your new spring will be the best ever. Hold on tight and trust. ♓ The next turn of events is completely out of your hands. Take your cue from the ones who are closest to your heart at this time. They have more clarity during this current time of transition.

♈ Aries Mar 20 to April 20

Key word: Freedom. Here it is Aries! This is your chance to grab all that you have wanted in life. Have faith. Hold your breath and leap. You'll never regret following your dreams. ♈ Aries, you and Pisces are currently in similar positions with regard to timing. (You may wish to seek out a Piscean with whom to commiserate.) Your new power is more in the form of having the necessary tools at your fingertips. Take your time. Don't rush. Now that you have what you need to accomplish your goals, you will also be afforded the necessary time and space.

♉ Taurus Apr 20 to May 21

Key word: Power. Apparently you have mastered faith, because now you are in power. You are in a position to make your world what you choose. Follow your heart. It will never steer you wrong ♉ As once hidden life keys reveal themselves, you are driven to set and achieve ethereal goals. Your maturity and experience (on emotional as well as spiritual levels) will light your path. Heed material world cues with guarded skepticism.

♊ Gemini May 21 to Jun 21

Key word: Forgiveness. New tricks to learn; Forgiveness is not an easy thing to understand. You understand forgiving yourself and others. Now you are ready for the next level. Consider what forgiveness means to you on a more universal level. You are evolved enough to see it with much more clarity now. ♊ If you are currently feeling in the dark look around you. Don not look for the answers to meet you face to face. Instead look for those who may have the answers in their own sense, then follow their lead. Talk with them, observe, pay attention to the subtitles. These things will bring you lasting foundational information.

♋ Cancer Jun 21 to Jul 22

Key word: Release. Things are not what you expected them to become, nor are things of the past what you thought they were. Let go of your old beliefs and allow yourself the space to create anew. ♋ Old arguments and conflicts dissipate. You can begin the holidays with a clean slate. A rebirth is yours with the onset of the New Year. This is an opportunity few are afforded. Give it your all and you will not be disappointed.

♌ *Leo Jul 22 to Aug 23*

Key word: Healing. You've given yourself quite a workout recently. You need to take time to heal your physical and emotional being. Take the winter to rest up and meditate. You will feel much more prepared for spring if you do. ♌ While the novelty of new responsibilities is wearing off keep in mind that your resources have not completely diminished. Take the remaining ideas and equity and combine them to create a new nest egg. Give it time. Let it grow.

♍ *Virgo Aug 23 to Sept 23*

Key word: Simplicity. You are a master at keeping things simple. This skill will serve you well at this time don't falter now. And don't let anyone convince you to get complicated for the time being. ♍ You are feeling like staying out of the fray for a while. Those who are regularly with you will understand your reasoning. Those who do not understand are not going to help eliminate stress. It is up to you to decide to cut them off or redistribute the pressure they create in your life, but clearly you have no more time or energy to entertain their pettiness.

♎ *Libra Sept 23 to Oct 23*

Key word: Efficiency. You have your own systematic way of doing things which generally works well for you. However, changes in your working environment require you to pare down your methods to a more bare bones approach. When the need presents itself give it a day or two of thought and then you will clearly see the changes you need to make. ♎ Storms come and go. You have a knack for peering through the raindrops to see reality for others. Turn that ability into a resource for yourself. Trust yourself to know yourself as well as you do others. You can see your way through anything on your own. Luckily you won't have to because all those around you have benefited from your kindness and will happily reciprocate.

♏ *Scorpio Oct 23 to Nov 22*

Key word: Play. You are perhaps having a sense that you grew up too fast, or there was something missing from your childhood. Don't underestimate the power of taking time out for fun. It is vital to your well-being to play a often as possible. ♏ Still toughing it out. But now your options are clearly placed before you. There will be no need to read between the lines. The decisions you make will have to be yours and yours alone, but you will find support in surprising places.

Send in your questions for our
Wa Wa page psychic:
Write to cowbone@earthlink.net Or send your questions to SBWN c/o the Wuwu page: PO Box 30645, Greenwood Station, Seattle WA 98103-0645

Comments from our group:

2 November 2003 Safer Sex

"Very informative. I liked how it was all (or mostly) straight forward."

"I am very glad that I came and I learned a lot tonight."

"Fabulous! Let's do this annually!"

"Wow! Very educational!"

"Terrific, I learned a bunch!"

"Sheri rocks!"

"What a great meeting! Sheri did a great job. :-)"

"Yes, very nice. Okay, let's practice!"

"Thanks Sheri (and Leilani), wonderful information and lots of fun. I can't wait to practice!"

"Next time let's do it longer allowing for more dialogue about bringing it up, boundaries/negotiations, and role play or playing it with stuff more. :-)"

Calendar

For locations, confirmations, or more information , call the appropriate message machine and someone will get back to you (with discretion if requested). For SBWN events call (206) 517-7767 or check our website http://www.geocities.com/sbwn/ . For all other Seattle events, (BiNet, Polifidelity). Call (206) 728-4533 or check websites listed to the right of this page.

Sun Dec 7th 4 to 6:30 pm Poly Discussion

Sun Dec 7th 6:30 to 8:30pm Coming Out

Sun Dec 14th No Meeting

Sun Dec 21st 6:30 to 8:30pm Holiday Social

Sun Jan 4th 4-6pm Poly Discussion

Sun Jan 4th 6:30pm Everything About Kids

Sun Jan 12th No Meeting

Sun Jan 18th 23rd 6:30 pm Potluck and Business Meeting

Sun Jan 25th No Meeting

Sun Feb 1st 4-6pm Poly Discussion

Feb 1st 6:30pm Topic To Be Announced

Sun Feb 8th No Meeting

Sun Feb 15th 6:30pm Valentine Chocolate Party

Local Groups

Seattle Bisexual Women's Network—Support and discussion groups at the Seattle LGBT Community Center, 1115 East Pike Street, Seattle, WA (206)-517-7767
Our website can be reached at:
http://www.geocities.com/sbwn/

Our email address is: sbwn@hotmail.com

When attending support group meetings, please refrain from wearing perfumes or other scented products for the comfort of all.

Polyfidelity Discussion Group—Support group and communtiy for people in or interested in multipartner relationships. Discussions and literature on responsible non-monogamy, intimate networks, alternative relationships and community. Bi-monthly potluck discussions, 5:30 pm at the SPCC (Sex Positive Community, aka "The Wet Spot," 1630 15th Ave W., Seattle, WA. For more information call: (206)-728-4533.
Http://www.scn.org/~spg/index.html

Seattle Bi Men's e-mail: seattlebiguys@hotmail.com or visit the website: http://www.binetseattle.org

Asian Lesbian Bisexual Alliance
P.O. Box 14232, Seattle, WA 98114
http://www.alba.org/alba.asp

Yin.com is a website listing Seattle Women's Events and web sites. http://www.yin.com